THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir, Discussions were held with the United States Trade Representative, Ms. Carla Hills, in Washington on 24 September, 1991 on various issues before the Uruguay Round, including the Intellectual Property Rights, and the process of macro-economic reforms under way in India.

(b) No, Sir. There was no discussion pertaining to the so-called Pressler Amendment.

(c) A number of measures have been introduced to improve our export competitiveness on a global basis.

Modifications in Tehri Dam Project as a result of earthquake

*74. SHRI RAM NARESH YADAV
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the wake of the recent earthquake in the Himalayas, the Tehri Dam Project would be stopped and the same will be resumed only after some modification therein; and

(b) what are the details of Government's plans in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER AND NON-CONVENTIONAL ENERGY SOURCES (SHRI KALP NATH RAI): (a) No, Sir. The recent earthquake in the Garhwal Hills measured 6.1 on the Richter Scale, while the proposed Tehri Dam is designed to withstand an earthquake of Magnitude 8 on the Richter Scale. The present earthquake has caused no damage to constructed structures of Tehri Dam i.e. head race tunnels, diversion tunnels and dam foundation.

(b) Does not arise.

Excise duty on hand made matchsticks

*75. SHRI S. K. T. RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state whether Government propose to remove excise duty on hand made match sticks as this duty is a burden on the consumers who are from the lower middle classes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): There is no proposal at present to exempt hand made matches from excise duty.

Privatisation of Financial Institutions and Nationalised Banks

*76. KUMARI ALIA: Wil the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state.

(a) whether Government have a proposal for privatisation of financial institutions and denationalisation of some Banks; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) Government is not currently considering any proposal for the privatisation of financial institutions for the de-nationalisation of public sector banks.

(b) Does not arise.